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Signs You May Need a New Well Pump

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 Oct. 28, 2014
By Staci Giordullo
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Staci Giordullo started writing for Angie's List in 2007, and as a senior writer, focuses primarily on

Anything that puts a strain on your well pump may cause it to fail prematurely. Here are some of the situations that can lead to a malfunctioning well pump.

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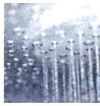
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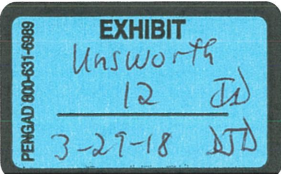
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Dear Angie: How do we determine if we need a new **well pump**? Our water pressure was decreasing over several months. Then, the other night, we came home to no running water at all. The pump's circuit breaker seems OK. — Sue M., Westerville, Ohio

Dear Sue: The first thing to do when you have no water is to shut off electrical power to the pump and to your water heater. That will prevent possible additional damage.

Then, it's time to discover the source of the problem. Your best bet is to contact a reputable, experienced well contractor. Your well pump may be the most likely suspect, but there could be other reasons for your dry spell.

Signs of pump, tank problems

You mentioned that you experienced decreased water pressure. That's one sign of a possible problem with a well pump or water tank. Here are others:

- Dirty water
- Loud or odd noises
- Air "spitting" from the faucet
- Unusually high electric bills (which may indicate a pump having to run continuously to maintain water pressure)



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Meanwhile, anything that puts a strain on the well pump can cause it to fail prematurely. Among situations that can lead to pump failure:

The expansion tank losing pressure

The tank is a closed container for the pump to fill with water. As water fills the tank, the air within becomes compressed, usually through an air-filled vinyl bladder, until pressure is high enough to trip the pressure switch. When someone opens a faucet, air pressure in the tank will squeeze the bladder and force water out. When enough water is used to lower the pressure, the switch turns the pump back on and the cycle repeats. If the tank loses its pressure (its “pre-charge,” which comes with the tank from the factory), the pump must work overtime to keep the tank full.

A power outage

Unless the well pump has a backup power supply, such as a battery or a backup generator, it will usually stop working if you lose your electricity.

Failure to tackle repairs

Common well pump repairs include replacing the pressure switch (about \$20 to \$40 plus a service call) or replacing the tank (\$250 to \$500, plus installation costs).

It’s a good idea, well experts say, to schedule regular [well maintenance](#). An annual inspection

should cost \$100 to \$120.

Meanwhile, prepare for a significant cost if you need a new well pump. It costs about \$1,000 to replace and install a pump and related components in a shallow-bored well. For a drilled well, the price may approach \$2,000, depending on shaft depth and pump horsepower.

Older or shallow wells may use an above-ground jet pump to pull water from the well. Submersible electric pumps that push water up are more common. They typically feature a sealed motor that is lowered into the well and has an above-ground power source.

Submersible well pumps can last 25 years

Well pump contractors can usually repair wells that rely on above-ground pumps more easily than those with submersible pumps. Repairing a submersible pump nearly always involves pulling it from the well. Fortunately, most submersible pumps are designed to last up to 25 years, but they won't last as long if a well contains high levels of sediment or other particles.

Be sure to hire a well service provider that has good online reviews and is appropriately licensed at the municipal or state level. To find out what kind of licensing is required where you live, contact your local health or water department. Or, you can link to the [Angie's List licensing tool](#).

Licensing requirements may also depend on the kind of work that's done. For instance, some well contractors may be licensed to provide drilling,

repair, and sealing services. Others may be limited to one service, such as installing pumps, or to a limited range of services, such as certain types of wells or borings.

Angie Hicks is founder of Angie's List. Have a question you want her team to answer? Email askangie@angieslist.com or tweet to #AskAngie. Follow Angie at @Angie_Hicks.

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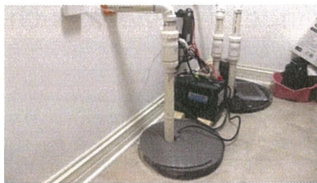
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